

United Way donations way up: college campaign wins award



George Brown staff made record high United Way donations in 2007 and garnered public recognition for their leadership and generosity. By late January, staff had donated more than \$146,000 to the umbrella charity funding agency — topping its target of \$140,000 and beating last year's total by more than \$20,000.

College United Way campaign cabinet chair Karen Thomson told a wrap of meeting of organizers and canvassers on Jan. 31 that this year more staff made donations — 281 up from 225 in 2006 — and more staff gave larger amounts. That generosity put George Brown near the top of the public sector donation ranking. "We just shine," she said, "We're only exceeded in dollar value by the University of Toronto."

For the second straight year, George Brown's ability to generate donations for the United Way has been recognized with a United Way of Greater Toronto Spirit Award in the category of Public Sector

George Brown United Way Cabinet members and staff ambassadors point to the college's most successful campaign ever. George Brown staff and students raised more than \$146,000, \$6,000 more than the target of \$140,000, with a big increase in the number of donors from last year.

Leadership Campaign. The award recognized the College's achievement in attracting gifts of \$1,000 or more.

"I am constantly inspired by our staff's generosity and involvement in the community," says President Anne Sado. "As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, this result reinforced our longstanding legacy of support to the community. And that legacy has grown significantly. Today George Brown maintains partnerships with more than 1,000 community agencies in the GTA. In terms of individual gifts of \$1,000 or more, GBC surpassed its goal achieving a 23 per cent increase from the previous year, which had been a 24 per cent increase on the year before that.

"2007 marked another extraordinary fundraising campaign by George Brown College, earning them a United Way Leader-

ship Spirit Award," said Susan McIsaac, Vice-President, Resource Development, United Way of Greater Toronto.

"United Way is grateful to GBC and its employees for their outstanding commitment and dedication to building a better city for us all. Their generosity provides support to United Way's network of 200 health and social service agencies, enabling United Way to continue to maximize its impact across Toronto."

According to Sado, supporting the United Way is as much about upholding GBC's connectedness to the GTA as it is about what defines the college every day. "GBC's United Way campaign team has simply relied on one of the underlying values on which we were founded — if you give people the opportunity to change lives for the better, they will step forward."

College gets \$5.1 million from province for upgrades

George Brown has been given \$5.1 million by the provincial government to upgrade its campuses.

"This funding will allow us to improve the George Brown student experience inside the classroom and out," says President Anne Sado. "It will help us expand and update our classrooms and labs and improve the efficiency and sustainability of our buildings and equipment."

The college has not announced exactly how it plans to spend the money.

"This a win-win for the students of George Brown and for Toronto's downtown core," said Toronto Centre MPP George Smitherman. "Improving the campuses will create a more exciting learning environment for students and make the downtown area more dynamic."

The grant was part of \$200 million given to Ontario universities and colleges in early February for renovations and upgrades. Over More than \$70 million is going to other universities and colleges in the Greater Toronto Area. The remaining funding is going to colleges and universities across Ontario.

The grants were announced by Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities John Milloy at a press conference held on Jan. 29 at George Brown's St. James Campus — his first visit to the college

"Our government's investment will help local communities across Ontario immediately by stimulating construction and creating jobs," said Milloy, "We are making an important investment in the knowledge-based economy of tomorrow by investing in today's students."



BEST PRACTICES DOCUMENT WILL HELP CHILDREN IN JAMAICA – George Brown is playing an important role in improving the lives of children in child care centres in Jamaica. It has taken the lead in creating a Best Practices document the centres will use in improve care. The document is the culmination of four years of work with partner early childhood institutions, the Early Childhood Commission, The Ministry of Education and Youth, UNICEF Jamaica, Shortwood Teachers' College and The Dudley Grant Memorial Trust. This document will be distributed to more than 3,000 early childhood institutions island wide as a guide to ensure Best Practices. At the January, 2008 Best Practices document launch in Kingston Jamaica were (from left to right): Elaine Foster Allen, Principal, Shortwood Teachers' College; Patricia Chorney Rubin, Chairperson, George Brown College; Lorna Golding, wife of Prime Minister Bruce Golding; Lynn Wilson, Faculty, George Brown College.



FREE VALENTINES: Professor Kathryn Payne (left) and School of Labour Co-ordinator Maureen Hynes were among the staff and student volunteers to hand out queer Valentine cards at St. James on Feb. 14. The cards were created by George Brown's Positive Space team and designed by Graphic Design student Sarah Graves. The cards were also printed in Dialog for students to cut out.

Grad runs 5-star, 4,000-room Las Vegas hotel

The very mention of Las Vegas evokes excitement and images of bright lights and decadent indulgences. As Randy Morton, the President and Chief Operating Officer of Las Vegas' top hotel Bellagio puts it, he and others in his industry are in "the WOW business."

Beyond the glamour of Las Vegas and its famed 'strip,' however, is a highly competitive hospitality sector that relies on the highest levels of customer service as much as on inventing new ways to entertain. As a 1980 graduate of George Brown College's Hotel Management program, Morton credits his education with giving him the solid foundation from which to launch his career.

"On the culinary side of things I remember learning a lot of techniques which were new at the time, and the instructors were interesting and challenging as well," recalls Morton. "It was a lot of learning and a lot of fun."

Indeed, Morton has built much of his success through continuous learning, which he says is largely about listening. On his recent return visit to George Brown, Morton told Hospitality and Culinary Arts students and alumni, over breakfast, that this had been one of his main keys to success since graduating.

"The only way to find out what people and customers want is to listen," Morton said in an interview. "Because, as in school, when you listen and ask questions you will learn more than what to do—you will learn why."

On the same visit, Morton spoke to an industry audience at a luncheon held by the Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts. Talking about the latest major developments in Las Vegas, Morton also touched upon the importance of industry support for learning institutions such as George Brown which play an essential role as the starting point for future generations of leaders. Standing before the sold-out audience, which included representatives from such hospitality organizations as Marriott Canada, the King Edward Hotel and the Toronto Hilton, Morton himself was the best illustration of this point.

After completing his program at George Brown, Morton joined the Four Seasons hotel in Toronto (coincidentally working alongside George Brown Chef School's present day Director, Chef John Higgins). By the time he first joined Bellagio in 2000, Morton had developed an approach to hospitality and leadership that would enable him to attain the hotel's first AAA Five Diamond award—a distinction no other Las Vegas hotel/casino



George Brown grad Randy Morton (above left) who is president of the high-end Bellagio Hotel (left) in Las Vegas, chats with Special Events students (from left) Marisa Jardine, Robb Russell and Stefanie Breckon at a breakfast reception where he spoke on Feb. 6. Morton told the 100 students and alumni who attended that his keys to success since graduation from the Hotel Management program in 1980 were finding a mentor, listening carefully, taking on hard assignments, and constantly learning. "The learning aspect is critical and you can't learn if you don't listen—make it a priority," he advised. "The more you listen, the more you learn." Morton described the Bellagio as "the most successful hotel in the world" with 96 per cent occupancy of its 4,000 rooms, a staff of 9,000 and annual revenue of \$1.5 billion.

had ever received and that the Bellagio has held for eight consecutive years since.

"As important as setting ourselves the goal was communicating that goal to all of our 9,000 employees to get their buy in," says Morton. "We made it a top priority to lead by example and to ensure that everyone understood the reason behind what they were being asked to do."

Today, Morton is applying that philosophy to everything at Bellagio through a organization-wide program which encourages staff to offer "sincere customer service." This is actually something that Morton believes the entire sector needs to do more of.

"In some ways our business has become routine and customer service has been based on a checklist approach—that's a mentality that needs to change in order for us to keep growing," says Morton, adding that "those who are most sincere will win every time."

Morton sees this deeper understanding of service as necessary for anyone in the hospitality sector, including students. Fortunately, on his return visit, he found that his views were shared and already being put into practice. "I currently see the George Brown Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts setting a higher standard of student learning which will ultimately lead to a higher standard for our industry."

The Academic Strategy is Everybody's Business

Over the past several columns I have been addressing some of the major challenges facing Ontario's economic prosperity, and the role George Brown, along with the college system as a whole, should play. This month I would like to bring the conversation closer to home by focusing on how the College is mobilizing itself to better fill this role through the Academic Strategy.

The larger issue of a looming labour shortage in Canada is multilayered and requires commitment from all stakeholders, in both the public and private sectors, to solve. In much the same way, success of the Academic Strategy relies on the participation of George Brown staff from every corner of the College. To date, more than 700 staff have taken part in the consultation process, and over 100 have contributed through a wide range of working groups.

Over the past three years, the College has invested over \$6M directly to address the priorities identified in the Academic Strategy, which has lead to some very encouraging and tangible results. Most notable is GBC's position among Ontario colleges according to the Ontario Applicant Survey by Academica Group. GBC ranked first in academic reputation in the GTA. In my recent series of Town hall presentations, I discussed these and other accomplishments, as well as the plan for moving forward. With the implementation work on the first phase of the Academic Strategy completing this year, planning for the next phase (2008-2011) was initiated last September. The planning is being lead by our Vice-President Academic, Michael Cooke.

After comprehensive analysis of the results, the recommended priorities thus far for the next phase include 1) continuing work to ensure our curriculum is outcomes-based curriculum and that course outlines are up-to-date and easy to access 2) more support for all faculty – part-time and full-time, especially professional development and

performance review 3) better classroom and study spaces for students 4) more and improved field education 5) shifting Chairs' work to increase their focus on academics 6) better e-supports including a portal, student e-mail and an improved learning management system

All of these priorities reflect an increased emphasis on college-wide implementation during the next phase of the strategy. We need staff to continue giving input, developing specific activities in their area in support of the Strategy, seeking advice and collaboration from the Academic Strategy

Steering Team, and proposing new ways of ensuring that we make good on the vision embedded in the Strategy.

Ultimately, each of us has a stake in the Academic Strategy, as GBC's ability to reach its full potential on the provincial landscape will depend most upon fulfilling its promise as an educational institution—at the core of which is academic excellence.

The Academic Strategy Steering Team is seeking feedback on its recommendations by early April and I invite you to check Insite for a list of ways to give input.



\$1.2 BILLION TRAINING AGREEMENT SIGNED AT GEORGE BROWN: Second year Electro-Mechanical Engineering Technician student Basam Ali (right) explains a project in the automated manufacturing lab to (from left) George Brown President Anne Sado, Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities John Milloy, and federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Monte Solberg. Milloy and Solberg were visiting Casa Loma Campus on Feb. 21 where they signed a \$1.2 agreement on training and skills development that will help Ontarians qualify for jobs. "I can't think of a better place to announce this than George Brown College," said Milloy. The money will be used to provide programs to help prepare the unemployed, immigrants, and people with disabilities for jobs.



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